



Please Help Save the Seals!

If you encounter a Hawaiian monk seal, take steps to avoid disturbing it. Remember, the seals need calm, quiet beach areas for resting, molting, and nursing pups.

- ✳ Stay at least 150 feet (or as far as possible) away from a monk seal on the beach or in the water. Always walk behind the animal, not between it and the water.
- ✳ Keep dogs away from seals. Dogs should be leashed and restrained on beaches where seals have been spotted.
- ✳ Discourage others from approaching or harassing the seals.
- ✳ When fishing, monitor all nets and lines. Do not leave fishing nets or lines behind.
- ✳ From time to time, individual Hawaiian monk seals have become overly "friendly" to swimmers and snorkelers. For your safety and the long-term safety of the seal, calmly exit the water if a monk seal is swimming near you. Do not look at the seal or engage it in any way. Never feed the seals.

Report all sightings to: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Mammal Hotline: **1-888-256-9840**
Report marine mammal violations: **1-800-853-1964**

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HAWAII WILDLIFE WATCHING GUIDE



Hawaiian Monk Seal



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⚙ Seekers of Solitude ⚙

Unlike most pinnipeds, Hawaiian monk seals are usually observed completely alone. They spend most of their time in the ocean and are fast, efficient swimmers and divers. Monk seals "haul out" onto the beach regularly for rest, and for extended periods during molting or pupping events. Hawaiian monk seals can be sensitive to and easily disturbed by human proximity, which may cause them to leave a haul-out site.



Photo by Chris Stankis
www.flickr.com/photos/bluewavechris

⚙ Only in Hawai'i ⚙

Hawaiian monk seals are endemic (unique) to Hawai'i, found nowhere else on earth but the Hawaiian archipelago.

The Hawaiians named these seals "Ilio holo I ka uuaa" which means "dog that runs in rough water."

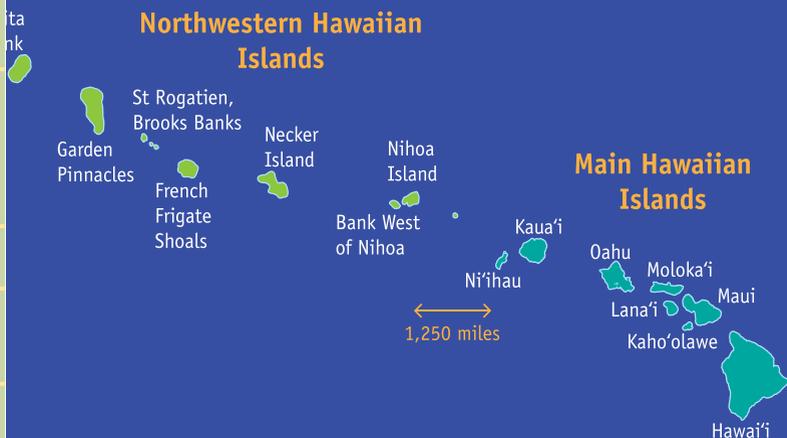
The English name "monk seal" may have referred to the loose skin around the seal's neck (which resembles the hood of a monk's robe) or the seal's solitary ways.

About 90% of the population of Hawaiian monk seals reside in the uninhabited islands and atolls that make up the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, extending 1,250 miles northwest of Kaua'i. Starvation and predation continue to cause a steep decline in the population.

The 10% of the population that lives around the main Hawaiian Islands is stable, and represents hope for the future of Hawaiian monk seals.

Quick Facts

Color	Dark grey to brown at adulthood with grey to yellow brown bellies. Sometimes the seals appear to be green, due to marine algae growing in their fur
Length	Ranges from 6 to 8 feet
Weight	Ranges from 400 to 600 pounds. Adult females are slightly larger than adult males
Life Span	25-30 years





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Photo by Chris Stankis
www.flickr.com/photos/bluwavechris

⚙️ Mating and Birth ⚙️

A female Hawaiian monk seal gives birth for the first time at 5 to 10 years of age. Mating occurs in the ocean.

Females give birth on beaches with shallow waters. The female bears one pup at a time. Gestation is thought to be 10.5 to 11 months. Births occur throughout the year, with the majority in spring and summer.



© James D. Watt / SeaPics.com

⚙️ Precious Pups ⚙️

At birth, a pup weighs 25 to 30 pounds. Its mother remains on or near shore to nurse and protect the pup for about six weeks. During that time, she doesn't eat and can lose up to 300 pounds, while the pup may grow to 200 pounds!

After the mom weans the pup, she abandons it. The pup must learn to catch its own food – the fish, eels, octopuses and crustaceans that are the mainstay of Hawaiian monk seals' diets.

Many monk seals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands do not live to maturity, although the majority born in the main Hawaiian Islands do survive. Most seals remain on or around their natal island for life.

⚙️ Critically Endangered ⚙️

The total Hawaiian monk seal population is currently estimated to be between 1,100 and 1,200 individuals, and is in decline at the rate of about 4% per year. Extinction is possible for a species with such perilously low population numbers.

Because of their low numbers, Hawaiian monk seals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act. Harassing or harming a monk seal is not only unconscionable; it is against the law.

Scientists are racing to prevent the extinction of Hawaiian monk seals. What is causing their decline?

- ⚙️ Tiger sharks and Galapagos sharks prey on monk seals, especially in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- ⚙️ Human activities on beaches can cause monk seals to abandon places where they have hauled out to rest, molt or care for their pups. When a mother and pup leave a beach due to human activity, both animals are put in peril.
- ⚙️ Entanglement in fishing lines, nets or marine debris can cause monk seals to drown.
- ⚙️ Starvation has been a major cause of death for juvenile seals, especially at the French Frigate Shoals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. No one is sure why this occurs.

